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ABSTRACT

Results of a survey to determine the attitudes of artists and craftspersons toward entering competitive juried exhibitions are reported. Questionnaires were sent to people entering the national Copper, Brass, and Bronze Exhibition for 1977 along with notices of acceptance or rejection. One hundred-ninety artists (38%) responded. The questionnaire contained ten general statements to which respondents agreed, agreed strongly, disagreed, or disagreed strongly. The functions of competitive juried exhibitions were examined in terms of their stimulating high quality work, encouraging unknown artists, establishing recognition, threatening established artists, encouraging work to please jurors, and rewarding a masculine type of competitive spirit. Results indicated that most artists/craftpersons perceive competitive exhibitions as a positive experience. However, frequent responses were that all juried shows are only as good as the jurors; jurying from slides is an inadequate way to conduct an exhibition; and that reasons for acceptance or rejection should be provided to those entering the competition. (KC)

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A REPORT ON A SURVEY OF ARTISTS/CRAFTSPERSONS' ATTITUDES TOWARD COMPETITIVE EXHIBITIONS

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September 1977
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A REPORT ON A SURVEY OF ARTISTS/CRAFTSPERSONS' ATTITUDES TOWARD COMPETITIVE EXHIBITIONS

Competitive exhibitions are a fact of life for artists and craftspersons in today's art world. The phenomenon is certainly not a new one, for we find evidence of competitions in Vasari's Lives of Artists as early as the 1400's. We read about the definite stipulations for the doors on the baptistry at the Cathedral of Florence for which the sculptor, Ghberti, is so famous. Judging from current trends, competitive exhibitions will be with us for many years to come.

In light of these facts and observations, a questionnaire was designed and sent to approximately 500 practicing artists/craftspersons in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Although the questionnaire was related directly to the national Copper, Brass, and Bronze Competition and Exhibition for 1977, the wording of the ten items was general enough to elicit the opinions and attitudes of a sizeable number of craftspersons from around this country and its border countries.

The sample with which we are dealing comes from those craftspersons who responded to direct or indirect advertising about the national Copper, Brass, and Bronze Exhibition, regarding which some 4,000 fliers were sent to colleges and schools of art across the United States. In addition to this solicited sample, announcement of the competition was made in a number of national arts as well as crafts periodicals. In response to solicited entries to the competition, over 500 artists/

craftspersons submitted their slides for jurying. Once the jurying had been completed, the questionnaire was included with the acceptance/rejection notices to all artists/craftspersons who submitted entries. The questionnaire was a 5" x 8" postage-paid form requesting that artists/craftspersons indicate in the appropriate space whether they "agreed," "agreed strongly," "disagreed," or "disagreed strongly" with the ten statements. Further, there was a space at the bottom of the questionnaire for general comments. It must be kept in mind that the background space for this questionnaire was the national Copper, Brass, and Bronze Exhibition for 1977 so that generalization to art competitions at large may not be totally valid. Approximately 190 questionnaires were returned by the artists, which represents the rate of approximately 38 per cent of the sample population. The reason for this rather high return is possibly the direct involvement in the exhibition and competition. Each questionnaire had an indication marked on it such that the investigators would be able to identify the responses and distinguish those responses of the artist/craftspersons that were accepted into the exhibition and differentiate them from those that were rejected from the competition.

RESULTS

The results are presented here in histogram form and are followed by some general conclusions. The histograms are graphs showing the responses of both accepted and rejected artists/craftspersons, the responses of only rejected artists and the responses of accepted artists. The graph is a plot of the four point scale of "agree strongly," "agree," "disagree," "disagree strongly," against the number of responses. Figure 1 shows the questionnaire in the form in which the artist/craftsperson received it. Statement No. 10 caused some difficulty due to the

typographical omission of the word "should," and was intended to read, ". . .should support competitive juried exhibitions." Nearly all respondents answered this item in a positive manner, so the investigators assumed that it was read as a positive statement. However, since approximately 50% did not answer this item, its results are dubious at best. In Figure 1, we have an overview of the response gained from all artists/craftspersons. In Figure 2, we see the responses of the rejected artists/craftspersons; and in Figure 3, we see the responses of the accepted artists/craftspersons. Following the tabulated data is a composite sampling of the types of comments which were included on the questionnaire. The method for this sampling was to classify the types of comments made on the questionnaire, breaking them down into the various categories or classifications which seemed logical due to the content of the statement.

Dear Artist/Craftsperson: 2-15-77

The following items are intended to elicit response in order to gather data about the phenomena of competitive juried exhibitions. Your response will be kept completely confidential. Please check the appropriate space as to your response to each statement: "AS"--agree strongly; "A"--agree; "D"--disagree; "DS"--disagree strongly. Please return this form as soon as possible. Thank you.

Robert L. Cardinale, Co-Director, The Copper, Brass, and Bronze Competition.

	"AS"	"A"	"D"	"DS"
1. Competitive juried exhibitions stimulate high-quality work by individual artists/craftspersons.				
2. Competitive juried exhibitions encourage the unknown artist/craftsperson.				
3. Participation in competitive, juried exhibitions helps to establish recognition among other artists/craftspersons.				
4. Competitive juried exhibitions insult the established artist/craftspersons.				
5. Competitive juried exhibitions are a threat to established artist/craftspersons.				
6. Competitive juried exhibitions encourage and support current trends.				
7. Competitive juried exhibitions encourage artists/craftspersons to work to please jurors.				
8. Competitive juried exhibitions reward dominatly masculine type of competitive spirit.				
9. Competitive juried exhibitions should be free for all to enter.				
10. The National Endowment for the Arts and other organizations specifically committed to the crafts support competitive juried exhibitions.				

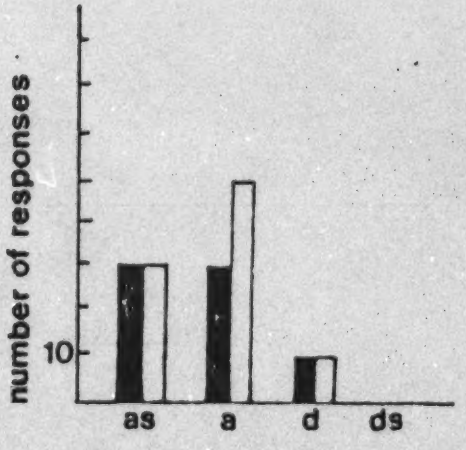
COMMENTS: _____

KEY

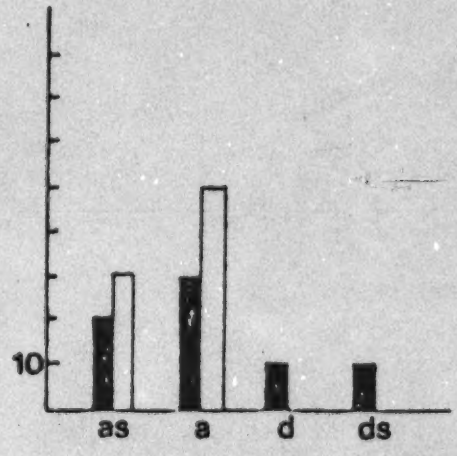
rejected artists

accepted artists

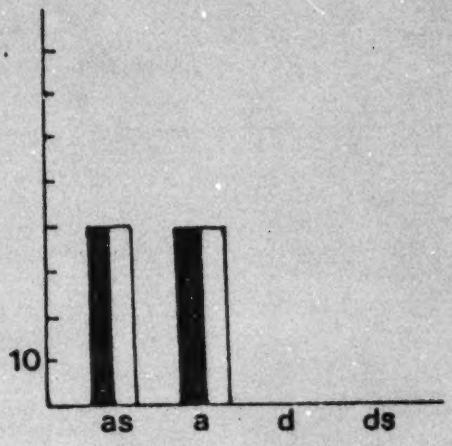
as: agree strongly
a: agree
d: disagree
ds: disagree strongly



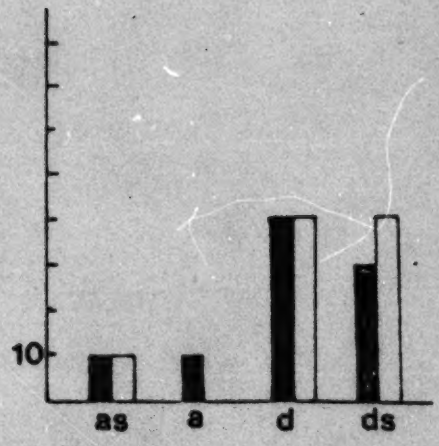
1. Competitive juried exhibitions stimulate high-quality work by individual artists/ craftspersons.



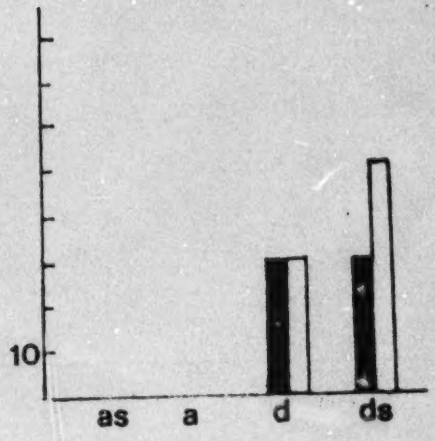
2. Competitive juried exhibitions encourage the unknown artist/ craftsperson.



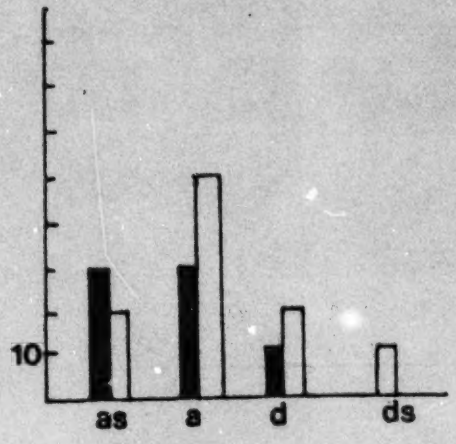
3. Participation in competitive, juried exhibitions helps to establish recognition among other artists/ craftspersons.



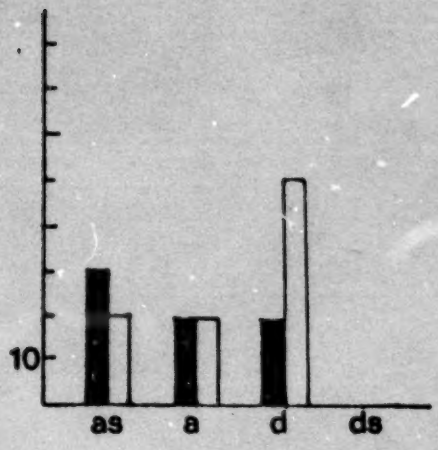
4. Competitive juried exhibitions insult the established artist/ craftsperson



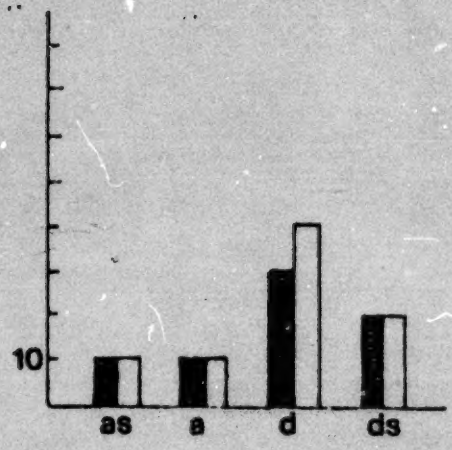
5. Competitive juried exhibitions are a threat to established artist/craftspersons.



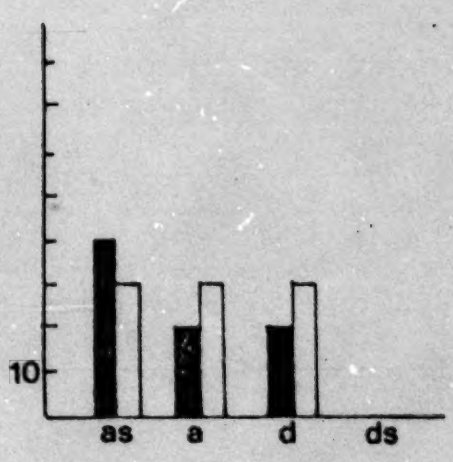
6. Competitive juried exhibitions encourage and support current trends.



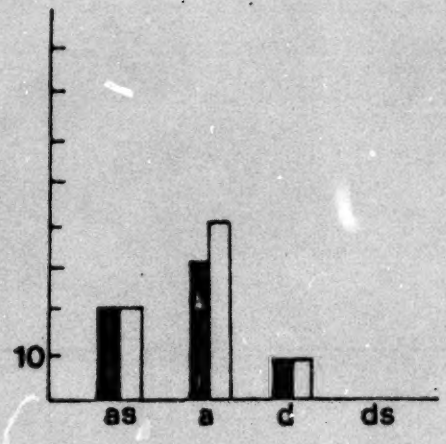
7. Competitive juried exhibitions encourage artists/craftspersons to work to please jurors.



8. Competitive juried exhibitions reward a dominantly masculine type of competitive spirit.



9. Competitive juried exhibitions should be free for all to enter.



10. The National Endowment for the Arts and other organizations specifically committed to the crafts support competitive juried exhibitions.

COMMENTS

On the questionnaire, there was a space and a request for soliciting comments about the whole area of competitive exhibitions. The investigators compiled these comments and chose certain ones that appeared frequently. We believe these comments give an interesting insight that was not gained from the questionnaire itself.

One comment that constantly recurred was that all juried shows were only as good as the jurors; that these shows reflect the concepts of the jurors in relation to current trends. Another comment that appeared often was that jurying from slides is an inadequate way to conduct an exhibition, and this seems to be an almost unanimous feeling among artist/craftspersons. There were also many comments that the "names" in metalwork keep showing up in major shows. There is some contention on the part of the artist/craftspersons responding that possibly "names" are judging each other's shows. Many respondents felt that entering juried shows was simply a gamble whether one is an established craftsperson or not, feeling that juried shows are simply several people's opinions and they may or may not concur with what the entering artist/craftsperson thinks is good.

Finally, the most often made comment on the responses was that artist-craftspersons felt that they should have some knowledge of the specific reasons for the rejection or acceptance, but especially the rejection of their pieces. The artists/craftspersons responses indicated that it was a responsibility to artists that had put forth the energy to enter, that some reason be given as to why work was rejected. The respondents seemed also to be much in favor of the idea of theme

or specified direction for an exhibition. Theoretically then, they are opposed to shows that are just wide open, general crafts shows.

A great deal of wisdom was displayed by a number of the craftspersons in relation to competitive exhibitions. Many felt competition to be a healthy reality and that, unfortunately, few artists are willing to submit to it. Others felt that competitive juried exhibitions were simply extra incentive to develop their work and professional exposure. In general, the artists/craftspersons were aware of politics and problems in exhibitions, but they wisely stated that there are so many shows and chances that it all evens out in the end.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This survey produced little startling information. Many of the responses were anticipated by the investigators, but now we have more evidence to support our beliefs.

In summary, we believe that competitive juried exhibitions are and will continue to be important events in the art world as well as important for individual artists. We believe that large national exhibitions may become a thing of the past because of the tremendous logistical problems. Further, we believe that small (10 to 25 artists, at most) exhibitions focusing upon a theme, media, or technique will be a positive direction for the future. Finally, we strongly recommend that all juried exhibitions develop a positive, critical form to be filled out by jurors and which will be returned to all artists submitting works to exhibition. This task, although difficult, would not be overly burdensome if exhibition size were to be reduced as was suggested. Competitive exhibitions have a responsibility to show the finest selection of work

in a given area, but also they are charged with the responsibility of raising the level of critical awareness of the arts on the part of the general public as well as of the individual artist.